

# The Progressive Era

US History ACP  
Social Studies Dept.  
Wellesley High School  
Academic Year 2010-2011

## The Progressive Era

### Essential Question:

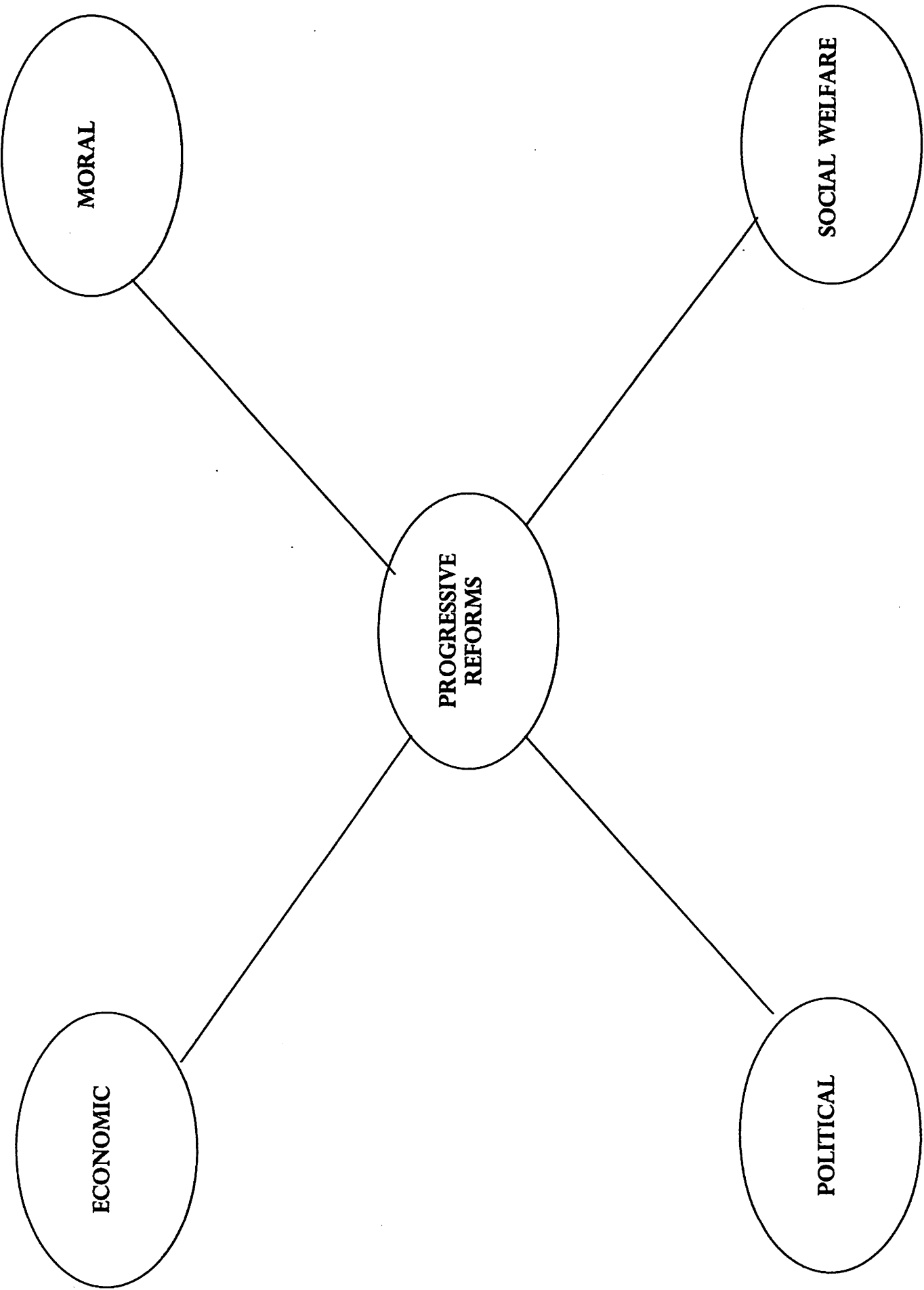
To what extent could the Progressive Era be characterized by a shift from individualism to protecting public interest?

### Focus Questions:

- What problems existed in America at the turn of the century and how did the Progressives attempt to fix these problems?
- How did Theodore Roosevelt use the presidency to push for political and social reform?
- How has the relationship between the meatpacking industry and the federal government evolved since 1906?
- How did women use their public image and the political system to achieve suffrage?
- How did Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson's visions of progressivism differ?
- What were the gains and limitations for African-Americans during the Progressive Era?
  - Booker T. Washington v. W.E.B. DuBois: Whose strategy was the most effective in improving the economic, political, and social status of the African-American community?

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Wellesley High School  
Social Studies Department





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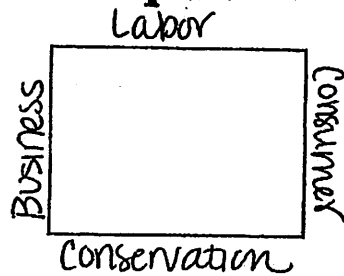
Berenson/Tallevi

### **How the Other Half Lives: Jacob Riis' Photographs**

Turn of the century reformers eager to improve the living and working conditions of the urban poor found a powerful weapon in the new medium of documentary photography. Like the muckraking writers who exposed political corruption and corporate excesses, journalists used cameras to shed light on the miseries of contemporary social life. Photographs not only served as witnesses to reality; they also served as agents of change. Images, such as those documented by Jacob Riis, provided compelling visual evidence of the wretchedness of life in the city and the exploitation of the poor in the workplace. These images captured the attention of the public, exposed the need for reform and helped provoke remedial legislation.

1. Examine the Riis photograph assigned to your group and read the caption/titles.
2. Answer the following questions:
  - A. What problems (Be specific) was Riis trying to expose with his photos? What category(ies) of reform would each photo fall under?
  - B. What is your reaction to the fact that Riis frequently "staged" his photographs – positioning people and their possessions for dramatic effect? Does this damage the credibility of his photographs and his message?
3. Discuss/Compare images and interpretations as a whole class.

## TR's Square Deal



**Directions:** Use your textbook chapter 17.3 pages 525-530 (this is in the middle of the section) to find and record information about TR's *Square Deal*.

What is a "bully pulpit"?

What was the Square Deal?

### 1. BUSINESS- "Trustbuster"

What act did TR use to prosecute trusts?

How do the examples below illustrate that TR was a trustbuster?  
Northern Securities Co.

Railroads & Hepburn Act

### 2. LABOR

How did TR involve himself in the struggles of labor?

con't

How does this make him a unique president?

Coal Strike of 1902

Why did TR get involved?

How did TR end the strike?

### **3. CONSUMER**

Identify when the following acts were passed and how each protected the consumer?

Pure Food and Drug Act

Meat Inspection Act

### **4. CONSERVATION**

What is the difference between conservation and preservation?

Why did TR take an interest in conservation?

When was the Newlands Reclamation Act passed & what was its function?

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When Should The Government Get Involved?

*Directions: For each of the following situations write yes if you feel the government should get involved or no if you feel it should not get involved.*

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. A company has forced all its competitors out of business by secret deals and now has raised prices.

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Evidence suggests that meat-packing companies are selling rotten meat to the public.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. A white man refuses to rent an apartment in his home to a black man,

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. A company has achieved a monopoly on its product by underselling all its competitors. It is a very efficient, well-run business.

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Lumber companies are wasting forests that have taken centuries to grow.

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Four railroads in an area have combined into one large railroad, leaving the people there at the mercy of the new monopoly.

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. A company refuses to hire anyone unless the person promises not to join a union.

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Evidence suggests that a company does not take precautions to protect its workers. Several workers have been hurt, but the company will not pay benefits to the families.

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Some companies hire mostly children and pay them very low wages.

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. Renters charge that their landlord is not making needed repairs in their apartments, which is endangering the renters' health.

*Write agree or disagree next to each statement.*

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. People who inherit money don't deserve to keep it all. They should pay an inheritance tax.

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. Rich people should be taxed at a higher rate than poor people.

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1. What was Roosevelt's view on trusts? How did he propose to deal with them? Why did he think it was necessary?
2. How did TR view his role as a politician? How did he use the presidency?
3. As president, how did TR deal with the coal strike of 1902? What was significant about his actions?

4. What were some of the new laws passed to protect consumers?

5. What were his views on conservation? What did he do to protect the American landscape?

6. Overall Reflective Question: How did TR define the presidency? What was his "focus" or main goal?

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*Upton Sinclair's The Jungle (1906)  
& Eric Schlosser's Fast Food Nation  
(2001): A Comparative Analysis*

*Assignment Due Class : Read & annotate both excerpts and be prepared to discuss the text & your analysis in a Socratic Seminar based on the following Question:*

- 1. What specific elements do these articles contain that make them good examples of investigative journalism?**
- 2. What responsibility should the federal government play in actively trying to solve the problems raised by investigative journalists?**
- 3. How have the following changed since 1906:**
  - a. Conditions of the meat packing industry.**
  - b. Relationship between the meat packing industry and the federal government.**
  - c. Role of muckrackers.**
- 4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Progressive era. How much progress has been made from 1906 to 2001?**

It gave them pleasure to believe this, for Scully stood as the people's man, and boasted of it boldly when election day came. The packers had wanted a bridge at Ashland Avenue, but they had not been able to get it till they had seen Scully; and it was the same with "Bubbly Creek," which the city had threatened to make the packers cover over, till Scully had come to their aid. "Bubbly Creek" is an arm of the Chicago River, and forms the southern boundary of the yards; all the drainage of the square mile of packing-houses empties into it, so that it is really a great open sewer a hundred or two feet wide. One long arm of it is blind, and the filth stays there forever and a day. The grease and chemicals that are poured into it undergo all sorts of strange transformations, which are the cause of its name; it is constantly in motion, as if huge fish were feeding in it, or great leviathans disporting themselves in its depths. Bubbles of carbonic acid gas will rise to the surface and burst, and make rings two or three feet wide. Here and there the grease and filth have caked solid, and the creek looks like a bed of lava; chickens walk about on it, feeding, and many times an unwary stranger has started to stroll across, and vanished temporarily. The packers used to leave the creek that way, till every now and then the surface would catch on fire and burn furiously, and the fire department would have to come and put it out. Once, however, an ingenious stranger came and started to gather this filth in scows, to make lard out of; then the packers took the cue, and got out an injunction to stop him, and afterwards gathered it themselves. The banks of "Bubbly Creek" are plastered thick with hairs, and this also the packers gather and clean. And there were things even stranger than this, according to the gossip of the men. The packers had secret mains, through which they stole billions of gallons of the city's water. The newspapers had been full of this scandal—once there had even been an investigation, and an actual uncovering of the pipes; but nobody had been punished, and the thing went right on. And then there was the condemned meat industry, with its endless horrors. The people of Chi-

cago saw the government inspectors in Packingtown, and they all took that to mean that they were protected from diseased meat; they did not understand that these hundred and sixty-three inspectors had been appointed at the request of the packers, and that they were paid by the United States government to certify that all the diseased meat was kept in the state. They had no authority beyond that; for the inspection of meat to be sold in the city and state the whole force in Packingtown consisted of three henchmen of the local political machine! And shortly afterward one of these, a physician, made the discovery that the carcasses of steers which had been condemned as tubercular by the government inspectors, and which therefore contained ptomaines, which are deadly poisons, were left upon an open platform and carted away to be sold in the city; and so he insisted that these carcasses be treated with an injection of kerosene—and was ordered to resign the same week! So indignant were the packers that they went farther, and compelled the mayor to abolish the whole bureau of inspection;

\*Author's Note: "Rules and Regulations for the Inspection of Live Stock and their Products." United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industries, Order No. 125:—

SECTION 1. Proprietors of slaughterhouses, canning, salting, packing, or rendering establishments engaged in the slaughtering of cattle, sheep, or swine, or the packing of any of their products, *the carcasses or products of which are to become subjects of interstate or foreign commerce*, shall make application to the Secretary of Agriculture for inspection of said animals and their products. . . .

SECTION 15. Such rejected or condemned animals shall at once be removed by the owners from the pens containing animals which have been inspected and found to be free from disease and fit for human food, and *shall be disposed of in accordance with the laws, ordinances, and regulations of the state and municipality in which said rejected or condemned animals are located*. . . .

SECTION 25. A microscopic examination for trichinae shall be made of all swine products exported to countries requiring such examination. *No microscopic examination will be made of hogs slaughtered for interstate trade, but this examination shall be confined to those intended for the export trade.*

Readina # 1 → Upton Sinclair's - The Jungle (1906)



so that since then there has not been even a pretence of any interference with the graft. There was said to be two thousand dollars a week hush-money from the tubercular steers alone; and as much again from the hogs which had died of cholera on the trains, and which you might see any day being loaded into box-cars and hauled away to a place called Globe, in Indiana, where they made a fancy grade of lard.

Jurgis heard of these things little by little, in the gossip of those who were obliged to perpetrate them. It seemed as if every time you met a person from a new department, you heard of new swindles and new crimes. There was, for instance, a Lithuanian who was a cattle-butcher for the plant where Marija had worked, which killed meat for canning only; and to hear this man describe the animals which came to his place would have been worth while for a Dante or a Zola.<sup>14</sup> It seemed that they must have agencies all over the country, to hunt out old and crippled and diseased cattle to be canned. There were cattle which had been fed on "whiskey-malt," the refuse of the breweries, and had become what the men called "steerly"—which means covered with boils. It was a nasty job killing these, for when you plunged your knife into them they would burst and splash foul-smelling stuff into your face; and when a man's sleeves were smeared with blood, and his hands steeped in it, how was he ever to wipe his face, or to clear his eyes so that he could see? It was stuff such as this that made the "embalmed beef" that had killed several times as many United States soldiers as all the bullets of the Spaniards; only the army beef, besides, was not fresh canned, it was old stuff that had been lying for years in the cellars.

Then one Sunday evening, Jurgis sat puffing his pipe by the kitchen stove, and talking with an old fellow whom Jonas had introduced, and who worked in the canning-rooms at Durham's; and so Jurgis learned a few things about the great and only Durham canned goods, which had become a national institution. They were regular alchemists at Durham's; they advertised a mushroom-catsup, and the men

who made it did not know what a mushroom looked like. They advertised "potted chicken,"—and it was like the boarding-house soup of the comic papers, through which a chicken had walked with rubbers on. Perhaps they had a secret process for making chickens chemically—who knows? said Jurgis's friend; the things that went into the mixture were tripe, and the fat of pork, and beef suet, and hearts of beef, and finally the waste ends of veal, when they had any. They put these up in several grades, and sold them at several prices; but the contents of the cans all came out of the same hopper. And then there was "potted game" and "potted grouse," "potted ham," and "devilled ham"—devyled, as the men called it. "De-yled" ham was made out of the waste ends of smoked beef that were too small to be sliced by the machines; and also tripe, dyed with chemicals so that it would not show white; and trimmings of hams and corned beef; and potatoes, skins and all; and finally the hard cartilaginous gullets of beef, after the tongues had been cut out. All this ingenious mixture was ground up and flavored with spices to make it taste like something. Anybody who could invent a new imitation had been sure of a fortune from old Durham, said Jurgis's informant; but it was hard to think of anything new in a place where so many sharp wits had been at work for so long; where men welcomed tuberculosis in the cattle they were feeding, because it made them fatten more quickly; and where they bought up all the old rancid butter left over in the grocery-stores of a continent, and "oxidized" it by a forced-air process, to take away the odor, rechurned it with skim-milk, and sold it in bricks in the cities! Up to a year or two ago it had been the custom to kill horses in the yards—ostensibly for fertilizer; but after long agitation the newspapers had been able to make the public realize that the horses were being canned. Now it was against the law to kill horses in Packingtown, and the law was really complied with—for the present, at any rate. Any day, however, one might see sharp-horned and shaggy-haired creatures running with the sheep—and yet what a job you would have to get the public to believe that a good

part of what it buys for lamb and mutton is really goat's flesh!

There was another interesting set of statistics that a person might have gathered in Packingtown—those of the various afflictions of the workers. When Jurgis had first inspected the packing-plants with Szedvilas, he had marvelled while he listened to the tale of all the things that were made out of the carcasses of animals, and of all the lesser industries that were maintained there; now he found that each one of these lesser industries was a separate little inferno, in its way as horrible as the killing-beds, the source and fountain of them all. The workers in each of them had their own peculiar diseases. And the wandering visitor might be sceptical about all the swindles, but he could not be sceptical about these, for the worker bore the evidence of them about on his own person—generally he had only to hold out his hand.

There were the men in the pickle-rooms, for instance, where old Antanas had gotten his death; scarce a one of these that had not some spot of horror on his person. Let a man so much as scrape his finger pushing a truck in the pickle-rooms, and he might have a sore that would put him out of the world; all the joints in his fingers might be eaten by the acid, one by one. Of the butchers and floorsmen, the beef-boners and trimmers, and all those who used knives, you could scarcely find a person who had the use of his thumb; time and time again the base of it had been slashed, till it was a mere lump of flesh against which the man pressed the knife to hold it. The hands of these men would be criss-crossed with cuts, until you could no longer pretend to count them or to trace them. They would have no nails,—they had worn them off pulling hides; their knuckles were swollen so that their fingers spread out like a fan. There were men who worked in the cooking-rooms, in the midst of steam and sickening odors, by artificial light; in these rooms the germs of tuberculosis might live for two years, but the supply was renewed every hour. There were the beef-luggers, who carried two-hundred-pound quarters into

the refrigerator-cars; a fearful kind of work, that began at four o'clock in the morning, and that wore out the most powerful men in a few years. There were those who worked in the chilling-rooms, and whose special disease was rheumatism; the time-limit that a man could work in the chilling-rooms was said to be five years. There were the wool-pluckers, whose hands went to pieces even sooner than the hands of the pickle-men; for the pelts of the sheep had to be painted with acid to loosen the wool, and then the pluckers had to pull out this wool with their bare hands, till the acid had eaten their fingers off. There were those who made the tins for the canned-meat; and their hands, too, were a maze of cuts, and each cut represented a chance for blood-poisoning. Some worked at the stamping-machines, and it was very seldom that one could work long there at the pace that was set, and not give out and forget himself, and have a part of his hand chopped off. There were the "hoisters," as they were called, whose task it was to press the lever which lifted the dead cattle off the floor. They ran along upon a rafter, peering down through the damp and the steam; and as old Durham's architects had not built the killing-room for the convenience of the hoisters, at every few feet they would have to stoop under a beam, say four feet above the one they ran on; which got them into the habit of stooping, so that in a few years they would be walking like chimpanzees. Worst of any, however, were the fertilizer-men, and those who served in the cooking-rooms. These people could not be shown to the visitor,—for the odor of a fertilizer-man would scare any ordinary visitor at a hundred yards, and as for the other men, who worked in tank-rooms full of steam, and in some of which there were open vats near the level of the floor, their peculiar trouble was that they fell into the vats; and when they were fished out, there was never enough of them left to be worth exhibiting,—sometimes they would be overlooked for days, till all but the bones of them had gone out to the world as Durham's Pure Leaf Lard!

END HERE

## 8 / the most dangerous job



ONE NIGHT I VISIT a slaughterhouse somewhere in the High Plains. The slaughterhouse is one of the nation's largest. About five thousand head of cattle enter it every day, single file, and leave in a different form. Someone who has access to the plant, who's upset by its working conditions, offers to give me a tour. The slaughterhouse is an immense building, gray and square, about three stories high, with no windows on the front and no architectural clues to what's happening inside. My friend gives me a chain-mail apron and gloves, suggesting I try them on. Workers on the line wear about eight pounds of chain mail beneath their white coats, shiny steel armor that covers their hands, wrists, stomach, and back. The chain mail's designed to protect workers from cutting themselves and from being cut by other workers. But knives somehow manage to get past it. My host hands me some Wellingtons, the kind of knee-high rubber boots that English gentlemen wear in the countryside. "Tuck your pants into the boots," he says. "We'll be walking through some blood."

I put on a hardhat and climb a stairway. The sounds get louder, factory sounds, the noise of power tools and machinery, bursts of compressed air. We start at the end of the line, the fabricating room. Workers call it "fab." When we step inside, fab seems familiar: steel catwalks, pipes along the walls, a vast room, a maze of conveyor belts. This could be the Lamb Weston plant in Idaho, except hunks of red meat ride the belts instead of french fries. Some machines assemble cardboard boxes, others vacuum-seal subprimals of beef in clear plastic. The workers look extremely busy, but there's nothing unsettling about this part of the plant. You see meat like this all the time in the back of your local supermarket.

The fab room is cooled to about 40 degrees, and as you head up the

Reading #2: Eric Schlosser's  
Fast Food Nation  
(2001)

line, the feel of the place starts to change. The pieces of meat get bigger. Workers — about half of them women, almost all of them young and Latino — slice meat with long slender knives. They stand at a table that's chest high, grab meat off a conveyor belt, trim away fat, throw meat back on the belt, toss the scraps onto a conveyor belt above them, and then grab more meat, all in a matter of seconds. I'm now struck by how many workers there are, hundreds of them, pressed close together, constantly moving, slicing. You see hardhats, white coats, flashes of steel. Nobody is smiling or chatting, they're too busy, anxiously trying not to fall behind. An old man walks past me, pushing a blue plastic barrel filled with scraps. A few workers carve the meat with Whizzards, small electric knives that have spinning round blades. The Whizzards look like the Norelco razors that Santa rides in the TV ads. I notice that a few of the women near me are sweating, even though the place is freezing cold.

Sides of beef suspended from an overhead trolley swing toward a group of men. Each worker has a large knife in one hand and a steel hook in the other. They grab the meat with their hooks and attack it fiercely with their knives. As they hack away, using all their strength, grunting, the place suddenly feels different, primordial. The machinery seems beside the point, and what's going on before me has been going on for thousands of years — the meat, the hook, the knife, men straining to cut more meat.

On the kill floor, what I see no longer unfolds in a logical manner. It's one strange image after another. A worker with a power saw slices cattle into halves as though they were two-by-fours, and then the halves swing by me into the cooler. It feels like a slaughterhouse now. Dozens of cattle, stripped of their skins, dangle on chains from their hind legs. My host stops and asks how I feel, if I want to go any further. This is where some people get sick. I feel fine, determined to see the whole process, the world that's been deliberately hidden. The kill floor is hot and humid. It stinks of manure. Cattle have a body temperature of about 101 degrees, and there are a lot of them in the room. Cattle swing so fast along the rail that you have to keep an eye on them constantly, dodge them, watch your step, or one will slam you and throw you onto the bloody concrete floor. It happens to workers all the time.

I see: a man reach inside cattle and pull out their kidneys with his bare hands, then drop the kidneys down a metal chute, over and over

again, as each animal passes by him; a stainless steel rack of tongues; Whizzards peeling meat off decapitated heads, picking them almost as clean as the white skulls painted by Georgia O'Keeffe. We wade through blood that's ankle deep and that pours down drains into huge vats below us. As we approach the start of the line, for the first time I hear the steady *pop, pop, pop* of live animals being stunned.

Now the cattle suspended above me look just like the cattle I've seen on ranches for years, but these ones are upside down swinging on hooks. For a moment, the sight seems unreal; there are so many of them, a herd of them, lifeless. And then I see a few hind legs still kicking, a final reflex action, and the reality comes hard and clear.

For eight and a half hours, a worker called a "sticker" does nothing but stand in a river of blood, being drenched in blood, slitting the neck of a steer every ten seconds or so, severing its carotid artery. He uses a long knife and must hit exactly the right spot to kill the animal humanely. He hits that spot again and again. We walk up a slippery metal stairway and reach a small platform, where the production line begins. A man turns and smiles at me. He wears safety goggles and a hardhat. His face is splattered with gray matter and blood. He is the "knocker," the man who welcomes cattle to the building. Cattle walk down a narrow chute and pause in front of him, blocked by a gate, and then he shoots them in the head with a captive bolt stunner — a compressed-air gun attached to the ceiling by a long hose — which fires a steel bolt that knocks the cattle unconscious. The animals keep strolling up, oblivious to what comes next, and he stands over them and shoots. For eight and a half hours, he just shoots. As I stand there, he misses a few times and shoots the same animal twice. As soon as the steer falls, a worker grabs one of its hind legs, shackles it to a chain, and the chain lifts the huge animal into the air.

I watch the knocker knock cattle for a couple of minutes. The animals are powerful and imposing one moment and then gone in an instant, suspended from a rail, ready for carving. A steer slips from its chain, falls to the ground, and gets its head caught in one end of a conveyor belt. The production line stops as workers struggle to free the steer, stunned but alive, from the machinery. I've seen enough.

I step out of the building into the cool night air and follow the path that leads cattle into the slaughterhouse. They pass me, driven toward the building by workers with long white sticks that seem to glow in the dark. One steer, perhaps sensing instinctively what the other don't,

turns and tries to run. But workers drive him back to join the rest. The cattle lazily walk single-file toward the muffled sounds, *pop, pop, pop*, coming from the open door.

The path has hairpin turns that prevent cattle from seeing what's in store and keep them relaxed. As the ramp gently slopes upward, the animals may think they're headed for another truck, another road trip — and they are, in unexpected ways. The ramp widens as it reaches ground level and then leads to a large cattle pen with wooden fences, a corral that belongs in a meadow, not here. As I walk along the fence, a group of cattle approach me, looking me straight in the eye, like dogs hoping for a treat, and follow me out of some mysterious impulse. I stop and try to absorb the whole scene: the cool breeze, the cattle and their gentle lowing, a cloudless sky, steam rising from the plant in the moonlight. And then I notice that the building does have one window, a small square of light on the second floor. It offers a glimpse of what's hidden behind this huge blank façade. Through the little window you can see bright red carcasses on hooks, going round and round.

### sharp knives

KNOCKER, STICKER, SHACKLER, RUMPER, First Legger, Knuckle Dropper, Navel Boner, Splitter Top/Bottom Butt, Feed Kill Chain — the names of job assignments at a modern slaughterhouse convey some of the brutality inherent in the work. Meatpacking is now the most dangerous job in the United States. The injury rate in a slaughterhouse is about three times higher than the rate in a typical American factory. Every year more than one-quarter of the meatpacking workers in this country — roughly forty thousand men and women — suffer an injury or a work-related illness that requires medical attention beyond first aid. There is strong evidence that these numbers, compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, understate the number of meatpacking injuries that occur. Thousands of additional injuries and illnesses most likely go unrecorded.

Despite the use of conveyor belts, forklifts, dehiding machines, and a variety of power tools, most of the work in the nation's slaughterhouses is still performed by hand. Poultry plants can be largely mechanized, thanks to the breeding of chickens that are uniform in size. The birds in some Tyson factories are killed, plucked, gutted, beheaded, and sliced into cutlets by robots and machines. But cattle

still come in all sizes and shapes, varying in weight by hundreds of pounds. The lack of a standardized steer has hindered the mechanization of beef plants. In one crucial respect meatpacking work has changed little in the past hundred years. At the dawn of the twentieth century, amid an era of extraordinary technological advance, the most important tool in a modern slaughterhouse is a sharp knife.

Lacerations are the most common injuries suffered by meatpackers, who often stab themselves or stab someone working nearby. Tendinitis and cumulative trauma disorders are also quite common. Meatpacking workers routinely develop back problems, shoulder problems, carpal tunnel syndrome, and "trigger finger" (a syndrome in which a finger becomes frozen in a curled position). Indeed, the rate of these cumulative trauma injuries in the meatpacking industry is far higher than the rate in any other American industry. It is roughly thirty-three times higher than the national average in industry. Many slaughterhouse workers make a knife cut every two or three seconds, which adds up to about 10,000 cuts during an eight-hour shift. If the knife has become dull, additional pressure is placed on the worker's tendons, joints, and nerves. A dull knife can cause pain to extend from the cutting hand all the way down the spine.

Workers often bring their knives home and spend at least forty minutes a day keeping the edges smooth, sharp, and sanded, with no pits. One IBP worker, a small Guatemalan woman with graying hair, spoke with me in the cramped kitchen of her mobile home. As a pot of beans cooked on the stove, she sat in a wooden chair, gently rocking, telling the story of her life, of her journey north in search of work, the whole time sharpening big knives in her lap as though she were knitting a sweater.

The "IBP revolution" has been directly responsible for many of the hazards that meatpacking workers now face. One of the leading determinants of the injury rate at a slaughterhouse today is the speed of the disassembly line. The faster it runs, the more likely that workers will get hurt. The old meatpacking plants in Chicago slaughtered about 50 cattle an hour. Twenty years ago, new plants in the High Plains slaughtered about 175 cattle an hour. Today some plants slaughter up to 400 cattle an hour — about half a dozen animals every minute, sent down a single production line, carved by workers desperate not to fall behind. While trying to keep up with the flow of meat, workers often neglect to sharpen their knives and thereby place more stress on their bodies. As the pace increases, so does the risk of accidental cuts and

FAST FOOD NATION, ERIC SCHLOSSER  
NY: HUNTERDON PUBLISHING 2002

stabblings. 'I could always tell the line speed,' a former Monfort nurse told me, "by the number of people with lacerations coming into my office." People usually cut themselves; nevertheless, everyone on the line tries to stay alert. Meatpackers often work within inches of each other, wielding large knives. A simple mistake can cause a serious injury. A former IBP worker told me about boning knives suddenly flying out of hands and ricocheting off of machinery. "They're very flexible," she said, "and they'll spring on you . . . zwing, and they're gone."

Much like french fry factories, beef slaughterhouses often operate at profit margins as low as a few pennies a pound. The three meatpacking giants — ConAgra, IBP, and Excel — try to increase their earnings by maximizing the volume of production at each plant. Once a slaughterhouse is up and running, fully staffed, the profits it will earn are directly related to the speed of the line. A faster pace means higher profits. Market pressures now exert a perverse influence on the management of beef plants: the same factors that make these slaughterhouses relatively inefficient (the lack of mechanization, the reliance on human labor) encourage companies to make them even more dangerous (by speeding up the pace).

The unrelenting pressure of trying to keep up with the line has encouraged widespread methamphetamine use among meatpackers. Workers taking "crank" feel charged and self-confident, ready for anything. Supervisors have been known to sell crank to their workers or to supply it free in return for certain favors, such as working a second shift. Workers who use methamphetamine may feel energized and invincible, but are actually putting themselves at much greater risk of having an accident. For obvious reasons, a modern slaughterhouse is not a safe place to be high.

In the days when labor unions were strong, workers could complain about excessive line speeds and injury rates without fear of getting fired. Today only one-third of IBP's workers belong to a union. Most of the nonunion workers are recent immigrants; many are illegals; and they are generally employed "at will." That means they can be fired without warning, for just about any reason. Such an arrangement does not encourage them to lodge complaints. Workers who have traveled a great distance for this job, who have families to support, who are earning ten times more an hour in a meatpacking plant than they could possibly earn back home, are wary about speaking out and losing everything. The line speeds and labor costs at IBP's nonunion plants now set the standard for the rest of the industry. Every other company

must try to produce beef as quickly and cheaply as IBP does; slowing the pace to protect workers can lead to a competitive disadvantage.

Again and again workers told me that they are under tremendous pressure not to report injuries. The annual bonuses of plant foremen and supervisors are often based in part on the injury rate of their workers. Instead of creating a safer workplace, these bonus schemes encourage slaughterhouse managers to make sure that accidents and injuries go unreported. Missing fingers, broken bones, deep lacerations, and amputated limbs are difficult to conceal from authorities. But the dramatic and catastrophic injuries in a slaughterhouse are greatly outnumbered by less visible, though no less debilitating, ailments: torn muscles, slipped disks, pinched nerves.

If a worker agrees not to report an injury, a supervisor will usually shift him or her to an easier job for a while, providing some time to heal. If the injury seems more serious, a Mexican worker is often given the opportunity to return home for a while, to recuperate there, then come back to his or her slaughterhouse job in the United States. Workers who abide by these unwritten rules are treated respectfully; those who disobey are likely to be punished and made an example. As one former IBP worker explained, "They're trying to deter you, period, from going to the doctor."

From a purely economic point of view, injured workers are a drag on profits. They are less productive. Getting rid of them makes a good deal of financial sense, especially when new workers are readily available and inexpensive to train. Injured workers are often given some of the most unpleasant tasks in the slaughterhouse. Their hourly wages are cut. And through a wide variety of unsavory means they are encouraged to quit.

Not all supervisors in a slaughterhouse behave like Simon Legree, shouting at workers, cursing them, belittling their injuries, always pushing them to move faster. But enough supervisors act that way to warrant the comparison. Production supervisors tend to be men in their late twenties and early thirties. Most are Anglos and don't speak Spanish, although more and more Latinos are being promoted to the job. They earn about \$30,000 a year, plus bonuses and benefits. In many rural communities, being a supervisor at a meatpacking plant is one of the best jobs in town. It comes with a fair amount of pressure: a supervisor must meet production goals, keep the number of recorded injuries low, and most importantly, keep the meat flowing down the line without interruption. The job also brings enormous power. Each



supervisor is like a little dictator in his or her section of the plant, largely free to boss, fire, berate, or reassign workers. That sort of power can lead to all sorts of abuses, especially when the hourly workers being supervised are women.

Many women told me stories about being fondled and grabbed on the production line, and the behavior of supervisors sets the tone for the other male workers. In February of 1999, a federal jury in Des Moines awarded \$2.4 million to a female employee at an IBP slaughterhouse. According to the woman's testimony, coworkers had "screamed obscenities and rubbed their bodies against hers while supervisors laughed." Seven months later, Monfort agreed to settle a lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on behalf of fourteen female workers in Texas. As part of the settlement, the company paid the women \$900,000 and vowed to establish formal procedures for handling sexual harassment complaints. In their lawsuit the women alleged that supervisors at a Monfort plant in Cactus, Texas, pressured them for dates and sex, and that male coworkers groped them, kissed them, and used animal parts in a sexually explicit manner.

The sexual relationships between supervisors and "hourlies" are for the most part consensual. Many female workers optimistically regard sex with their supervisor as a way to gain a secure place in American society, a green card, a husband — or at the very least a transfer to an easier job at the plant. Some supervisors become meatpacking Casanovas, engaging in multiple affairs. Sex, drugs, and slaughterhouses may seem an unlikely combination, but as one former Monfort employee told me: "Inside those walls is a different world that obeys different laws." Late on the second shift, when it's dark outside, assignments take place in locker rooms, staff rooms, and parked cars, even on the catwalk over the kill floor.

## the worst

SOME OF THE MOST DANGEROUS jobs in meatpacking today are performed by the late-night cleaning crews. A large proportion of these workers are illegal immigrants. They are considered "independent contractors," employed not by the meatpacking firms but by sanitation companies. They earn hourly wages that are about one-third lower than those of regular production employees. And their work is

so hard and so horrendous that words seem inadequate to describe it. The men and women who now clean the nation's slaughterhouses may arguably have the worst job in the United States. "It takes a really dedicated person," a former member of a cleaning crew told me, "or a really desperate person to get the job done."

When a sanitation crew arrives at a meatpacking plant, usually around midnight, it faces a mess of monumental proportions. Three to four thousand cattle, each weighing about a thousand pounds, have been slaughtered there that day. The place has to be clean by sunrise. Some of the workers wear water-resistant clothing; most don't. Their principal cleaning tool is a high-pressure hose that shoots a mixture of water and chlorine heated to about 180 degrees. As the water is sprayed, the plant fills with a thick, heavy fog. Visibility drops to as little as five feet. The conveyor belts and machinery are running. Workers stand on the belts, spraying them, riding them like moving sidewalks, as high as fifteen feet off the ground. Workers climb ladders with hoses and spray the catwalks. They get under tables and conveyor belts, climbing right into the bloody muck, cleaning out grease, fat, manure, leftover scraps of meat.

Glasses and safety goggles fog up. The inside of the plant heats up; temperatures soon exceed 100 degrees. "It's hot, and it's foggy, and you can't see anything," a former sanitation worker said. The crew members can't see or hear each other when the machinery's running. They routinely spray each other with burning hot, chemical-laden water. They are sickened by the fumes. Jesus, a soft-spoken employee of DCS Sanitation Management, Inc., the company that IBP uses in many of its plants, told me that every night on the job he gets terrible headaches. "You feel it in your head," he said. "You feel it in your stomach, like you want to throw up." A friend of his vomits whenever they clean the rendering area. Other workers tease the young man as he retches. Jesus says the stench in rendering is so powerful that it won't wash off; no matter how much soap you use after a shift, the smell comes home with you, seeps from your pores.

One night while Jesus was cleaning, a coworker forgot to turn off a machine, lost two fingers, and went into shock. An ambulance came and took him away, as everyone else continued to clean. He was back at work the following week. "If one hand is no good," the supervisor told him, "use the other." Another sanitation worker lost an arm in a machine. Now he folds towels in the locker room. The scariest job, according to Jesus, is cleaning the vents on the roof of the slaughter-

house. The vents become clogged with grease and dried blood. In the winter, when everything gets icy and the winds pick up, Jesus worries that a sudden gust will blow him off the roof into the darkness.

Although official statistics are not kept, the death rate among slaughterhouse sanitation crews is extraordinarily high. They are the ultimate in disposable workers: illegal, illiterate, impoverished, untrained. The nation's worst job can end in just about the worst way. Sometimes these workers are literally ground up and reduced to nothing.

A brief description of some cleaning-crew accidents over the past decade says more about the work and the danger than any set of statistics. At the Monfort plant in Grand Island, Nebraska, Richard Skala was beheaded by a dehiding machine. Carlos Vincente — an employee of T and G Service Company, a twenty-eight-year-old Guatemalan who'd been in the United States for only a week — was pulled into the cogs of a conveyor belt at an Excel plant in Fort Morgan, Colorado, and torn apart. Lorenzo Marin, Sr., an employee of DCS Sanitation, fell from the top of a skinning machine while cleaning it with a high-pressure hose, struck his head on the concrete floor of an IBP plant in Columbus Junction, Iowa, and died. Another employee of DCS Sanitation, Salvador Hernandez-Gonzalez, had his head crushed by a pork-loin processing machine at an IBP plant in Madison, Nebraska. The same machine had fatally crushed the head of another worker, Ben Barone, a few years earlier. At a National Beef plant in Liberal, Kansas, Homer Stull climbed into a blood-collection tank to clean it, a filthy tank thirty feet high. Stull was overcome by hydrogen sulfide fumes. Two coworkers climbed into the tank and tried to rescue him. All three men died. Eight years earlier, Henry Wolf had been overcome by hydrogen sulfide fumes while cleaning the very same tank; Gary Sanders had tried to rescue him; both men died; and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) later fined National Beef for its negligence. The fine was \$480 for each man's death.

## don't get caught

DURING THE SAME YEARS when the working conditions at America's meatpacking plants became more dangerous — when line speeds increased and illegal immigrants replaced skilled workers — the fed-

eral government greatly reduced the enforcement of health and safety laws. OSHA had long been despised by the nation's manufacturers, who considered the agency a source of meddlesome regulations and unnecessary red tape. When Ronald Reagan was elected president in 1980, OSHA was already underfunded and understaffed: its 1,300 inspectors were responsible for the safety of more than 5 million workplaces across the country. A typical American employer could expect an OSHA inspection about once every eighty years. Nevertheless, the Reagan administration was determined to reduce OSHA's authority even further, as part of the push for deregulation. The number of OSHA inspectors was eventually cut by 20 percent, and in 1981 the agency adopted a new policy of "voluntary compliance." Instead of arriving unannounced at a factory and performing an inspection, OSHA employees were required to look at a company's injury log before setting foot inside the plant. If the records showed an injury rate at the factory lower than the national average for all manufacturers, the OSHA inspector had to turn around and leave at once — without entering the plant, examining its equipment, or talking to any of its workers. These injury logs were kept and maintained by company officials.

For most of the 1980s OSHA's relationship with the meatpacking industry was far from adversarial. While the number of serious injuries rose, the number of OSHA inspections fell. The death of a worker on the job was punished with a fine of just a few hundred dollars. At a gathering of meat company executives in October of 1987, OSHA's safety director, Barry White, promised to change federal safety standards that "appear amazingly stupid to you or overburdening or just not useful." According to an account of the meeting later published in the *Chicago Tribune*, the safety director at OSHA — the federal official most responsible for protecting the lives of meatpacking workers — acknowledged his own lack of qualification for the job. "I know very well that you know more about safety and health in the meat industry than I do," White told the executives. "And you know more about safety and health in the meat industry than any single employee at OSHA."

OSHA's voluntary compliance policy did indeed reduce the number of recorded injuries in meatpacking plants. It did not, however, reduce the number of people getting hurt. It merely encouraged companies, in the words of a subsequent congressional investigation, "to understate injuries, to falsify records, and to cover up accidents." ~~MAINTAIN~~

Continue to  
next page



of Sinclair's charges. When it confirmed the accuracy of the book, Roosevelt called for legislation requiring mandatory federal inspection of all meat sold through interstate commerce, accurate labeling and dating of canned meat products, and a fee-based regulatory system that made meatpackers pay the cost of cleaning up their own industry.

The powerful magnates of the Beef Trust responded by vilifying Roosevelt and Upton Sinclair, dismissing their accusations, and launching a public relations campaign to persuade the American people that nothing was wrong. "Meat and food products, generally speaking," J. Ogden Armour claimed in a *Saturday Evening Post* article, "are handled as carefully and circumspectly in large packing houses as they are in the average home kitchen." Testifying before Congress, Thomas Wilson, an executive at Morris & Company, said that blame for the occasional sanitary lapse lay not with the policies of industry executives, but with the greed and laziness of slaughterhouse workers. "Men are men," Wilson contended, "and it is pretty hard to control some of them." After an angry legislative battle, Congress narrowly passed the Meat Inspection Act of 1906, a watered-down version of Roosevelt's proposals that made taxpayers pay for the new regulations.

The meatpacking industry's response to *The Jungle* established a pattern that would be repeated throughout the twentieth century, whenever health concerns were raised about the nation's beef. The industry has repeatedly denied that problems exist, impugned the motives of its critics, fought vehemently against federal oversight, sought to avoid any responsibility for outbreaks of food poisoning, and worked hard to shift the costs of food safety efforts onto the general public. The industry's strategy has been driven by a profound antipathy to any government regulation that might lower profits. "There is no limit to the expense that might be put upon us," the Beef Trust's Wilson said in 1906, arguing against a federal inspection plan that would have cost meatpackers less than a dime per head of cattle. "[Our] contention is that in all reasonableness and fairness we are paying all we care to pay."

During the 1980s, as the risks of widespread contamination increased, the meatpacking industry blocked the use of microbial testing in the federal meat inspection program. A panel appointed by the National Academy of Sciences warned in 1985 that the nation's meat in-

begin w/ this section  
all we care to pay

"THIS IS NO FAIRY STORY and no joke," Upton Sinclair wrote in 1906; "the meat would be shoveled into carts, and the man who did the shoveling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one — there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a tidbit." Sinclair described a long list of practices in the meatpacking industry that threatened the health of consumers: the routine slaughter of diseased animals, the use of chemicals such as borax and glycerine to disguise the smell of spoiled beef, the deliberate mislabeling of canned meat, the tendency of workers to urinate and defecate on the kill floor. After reading *The Jungle* President Theodore Roosevelt ordered an independent investigation

spection program was hopelessly outdated, still relying on visual and olfactory clues to find disease while dangerous pathogens slipped past undetected. Three years later, another National Academy of Sciences panel warned that the nation's public health infrastructure was in serious disarray, limiting its ability to track or prevent the spread of newly emerging pathogens. Without additional funding for public health measures, outbreaks and epidemics of new diseases were virtually inevitable. "Who knows what crisis will be next?" said the chairman of the panel.

Nevertheless, the Reagan and Bush administrations cut spending on public health measures and staffed the U.S. Department of Agriculture with officials far more interested in government deregulation than in food safety. The USDA became largely indistinguishable from the industries it was meant to police. President Reagan's first secretary of agriculture was in the hog business. His second was the president of the American Meat Institute (formerly known as the American Meat Packers Association). And his choice to run the USDA's Food Marketing and Inspection Service was a vice president of the National Cattleman's Association. President Bush later appointed the president of the National Cattleman's Association to the job.

Two months after the threat of deadly new outbreaks was outlined by the National Academy of Sciences, the USDA launched the Streamlined Inspection System for Cattle (SIS-C). The program was designed to reduce the presence of federal inspectors in the nation's slaughterhouses, allowing company employees to assume most of the food safety tasks. According to the Reagan administration, the Streamlined Inspection System for Cattle would help the USDA shrink its budget and deploy its manpower more efficiently. Freed from the hassles of continuous federal inspection, SIS-C also enabled meatpacking companies to increase their line speeds. Despite the fact that IBP and Morrell had just a year earlier been caught falsifying safety records and keeping two sets of injury logs, the meatpacking industry was given the authority to inspect its own meat. SIS-C was launched in 1988 as a pilot program at five major slaughterhouses that supplied about one-fifth of the beef consumed in the United States. The USDA hoped that within a decade the new system would extend nationwide and that the number of federal meat inspectors would be cut by half.

A 1992 USDA study of the Streamlined Inspection System for Cattle concluded that beef produced under the program was no dirtier than beef produced at slaughterhouses fully staffed by federal inspec-

tors. But the accuracy of that study was thrown into doubt by the revelation that meatpacking firms had sometimes been told in advance when USDA investigators would be arriving at SIS-C slaughterhouses. The Monfort beef plant in Greeley, Colorado, was one of the original participants in the program. According to federal inspectors there, the meat produced under the Streamlined Inspection System "had never been filthier." At SIS-C slaughterhouses, visibly diseased animals — cattle infected with measles and tapeworms, covered with abscesses — were being slaughtered. Poorly trained company inspectors were allowing the shipment of beef contaminated with fecal material, hair, insects, metal shavings, urine, and vomit.

The Streamlined Inspection System for Cattle was discontinued in 1993, following the Jack in the Box outbreak. Cutbacks in federal inspection seemed difficult to justify, when hundreds of children had been made seriously ill by tainted hamburgers. Although the precise source of *E. coli* O157:H7 contamination was never identified, some of the beef used by Jack in the Box came from an SIS-C plant — a Monfort slaughterhouse. The meatpacking industry's immediate reaction to the outbreak was an attempt to shift the blame elsewhere. As children continued to be hospitalized after eating Jack in the Box hamburgers, J. Patrick Boyle, the head of the American Meat Institute said, "This recent outbreak sheds light on a nationwide problem: inconsistent information about proper cooking temperatures for hamburger." The meat industry's allies at the USDA also seemed remarkably laissez-faire, noting that the contaminated hamburger patties had not violated any federal standards. According to Dr. Russell Cross, head of the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, "The presence of bacteria in raw meat, including *E. coli* O157:H7, although undesirable, is unavoidable, and not cause for condemnation of the product." Members of the newly elected Clinton administration disagreed. Dr. Cross, a Bush appointee, resigned. On September 29, 1993, his replacement, Michael R. Taylor, announced that *E. coli* O157:H7 would henceforth be considered an illegal adulterant, that no ground beef contaminated with it could be sold, and that the USDA would begin random microbial testing to remove it from the nation's food supply. The American Meat Institute immediately filed a lawsuit in federal court to prevent the USDA from testing any ground beef for *E. coli* O157:H7. Judge James R. Rowlin, a conservative and a cattleman, dismissed the meatpacking industry's arguments and allowed the testing to proceed.

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# Modern History Sourcebook: The Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls Conference, 1848

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*Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, two American activists in the movement to abolish slavery called together the first conference to address Women's rights and issues in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. Part of the reason for doing so had been that Mott had been refused permission to speak at the world anti-slavery convention in London, even though she had been an official delegate. Applying the analysis of human freedom developed in the Abolitionist movement, Stanton and others began the public career of modern feminist analysis*

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## The Declaration of Sentiments

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes that impel them to such a course.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of those who suffer from it to refuse allegiance to it, and to insist upon the institution of a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their duty to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of the women under this government, and such is now the necessity which constrains them to demand the equal station to which they are entitled. The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations

on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

He has compelled her to submit to laws, in the formation of which she had no voice.

He has withheld from her rights which are given to the most ignorant and degraded men--both natives and foreigners.

Having deprived her of this first right of a citizen, the elective franchise, thereby leaving her without representation in the halls of legislation, he has oppressed her on all sides.

He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead.

He has taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns.

He has made her, morally, an irresponsible being, as she can commit many crimes with impunity, provided they be done in the presence of her husband. In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master--the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty, and to administer chastisement.

He has so framed the laws of divorce, as to what shall be the proper causes, and in case of separation, to whom the guardianship of the children shall be given, as to be wholly regardless of the happiness of women--the law, in all cases, going upon a false supposition of the supremacy of man, and giving all power into his hands.

After depriving her of all rights as a married woman, if single, and the owner of property, he has taxed her to support a government which recognizes her only when her property can be made profitable to it.

He has monopolized nearly all the profitable employments, and from those she is permitted to follow, she receives but a scanty remuneration. He closes against her all the avenues to wealth and distinction which he considers most honorable to himself. As a teacher of theology, medicine, or law, she is not known.

He has denied her the facilities for obtaining a thorough education, all colleges being closed against her.

He allows her in church, as well as state, but a subordinate position, claiming apostolic authority for her exclusion from the ministry, and, with some exceptions, from any public participation in the affairs of the church.

He has created a false public sentiment by giving to the world a different code of morals for men and women, by which moral delinquencies which exclude women from society, are not only tolerated, but deemed of little account in man.

He has usurped the prerogative of Jehovah himself, claiming it as his right to assign for her a sphere of action, when that belongs to her conscience and to her God.

He has endeavored, in every way that he could, to destroy her confidence in her own powers, to lessen her self-respect, and to make her willing to lead a dependent and abject life.

Now, in view of this entire disfranchisement of one-half the people of this country, their social and religious degradation--in view of the unjust laws above mentioned, and because women do feel themselves aggrieved, oppressed, and fraudulently deprived of their most sacred rights, we insist that they have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of the United States.

from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *A History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. 1 (Rochester, N.Y.: Fowler and Wells, 1889), pages 70-71.

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**CHAPTER**  
**17**

**Section 5**

**GEOGRAPHY APPLICATION: REGION**

# *The Movement Toward Woman Suffrage*

*Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the map carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.*

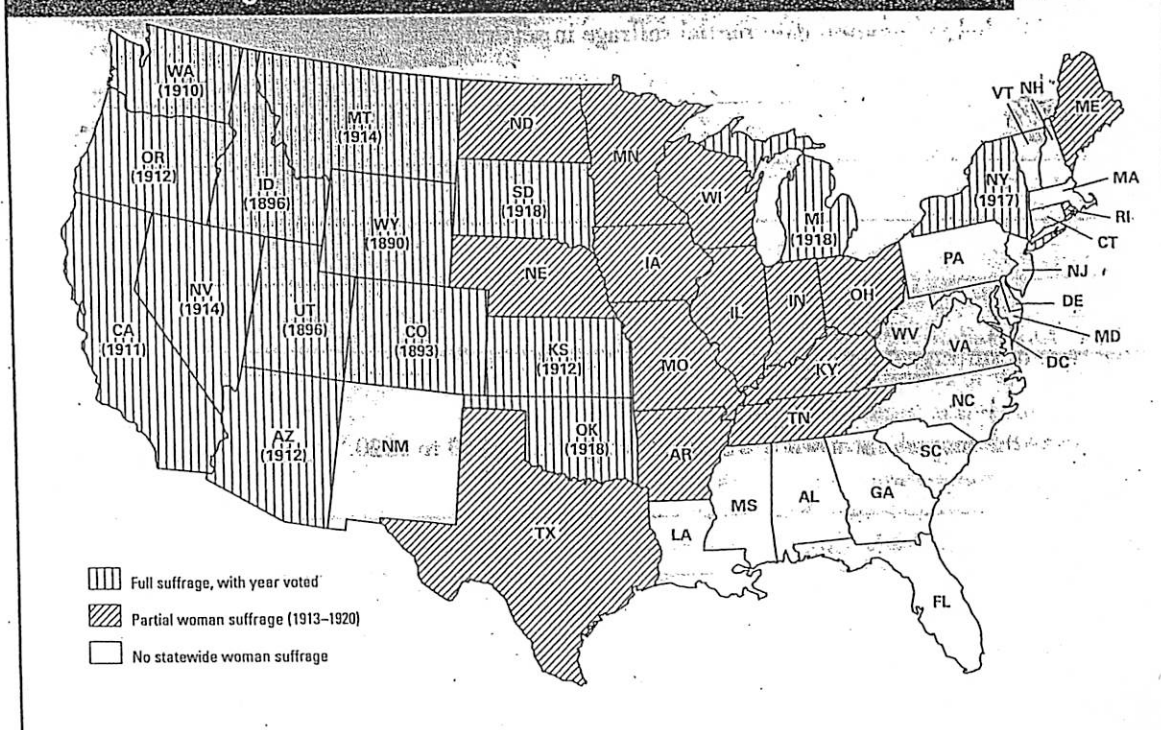
In the late 1800s, new amendments to the U.S. Constitution that guaranteed voting rights still continued to exclude women. Therefore, suffragists concentrated on the regional level—seeking the passage of state constitutional amendments insuring women the right to vote. It was felt that this strategy could eventually force a federal amendment, and in a six-year period, four states granted women full voting rights.

However, the campaign then stalled. For 13 years, until 1910, no other state passed an amendment for woman suffrage. So a new tactic was tried: gaining partial voting rights. The U.S. Constitution allows state legislatures to set qualifications for voting for presidential electors, without sending the question to voters as an attempt for an amendment requires. Thus, women pressed states for the right to vote for president through legislative action.

In Illinois, where Progressives controlled the state legislature, the plan worked. This state, in 1913, became the first to grant women partial suffrage. Grace Wilbur Trout wrote of its impact:

Illinois was the first state east of the Mississippi and the first state even bordering the great father of waters, to break down the conservatism of the great Middle West and give suffrage to its women. . . . New York women never could have won their great suffrage victory in 1917 if Illinois had not first opened the door in 1913, and the winning of suffrage in New York so added to the political strength of the suffrage movement in Congress that it made possible the passage of the federal suffrage amendment in 1919.

**Woman Suffrage Before Ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, 1920**



Name:

US 32

Date:

*The Women's Suffrage Movement in the Progressive Era*

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The Final Push for Suffrage:

*3 periods of the women's suffrage movement:*

The First 20 years: 1848-1869

Independent Women's Suffrage Movement: 1869-1890

New Activism & Success: 1890-1920

How did women win the vote?

What was the impact?

Date:

US32  
Berenson

### Progressive Era: Varying Thoughts on Race Relations

By 1900, the Tuskegee Institute, headed by Booker T. Washington, had been operating for almost 20 years. Five years later, W.E.B. Du Bois would found the Niagara Movement. The two men had differing points of view and different agendas for African Americans.

**Directions:** Study each document carefully and answer the question about it

#### Document 1

Brickmaking has now become such an important industry at [Tuskegee Institute] that last season our students manufactured twelve hundred thousand of first-class bricks. . . . Aside from this, scores of young men have mastered the brickmaking trade . . . and are now engaged in this industry in many parts of the South.

The making of these bricks taught me an important lesson in regard to the relations of the two races in the South. Many white people who had had no contact with the school . . . came to us to buy bricks because they found out that ours were good bricks. They discovered that we were supplying a real want in the community. The making of these bricks caused many of the white residents of the neighbourhood to begin to feel that . . . in educating our students we were adding something to the wealth and comfort of the community. As the people of the neighbourhood came to us to buy bricks, we got acquainted with them; . . . Our business interests became intermingled, . . . This, in a large measure, helped to lay the foundation for the pleasant relations that have continued to exist between us and the white people in that section, and which now extend throughout the South.

—from *Up from Slavery* by Booker T. Washington

From this excerpt, what inference can you draw about Washington's approach to race relations? On what is your inference based?



## Document 2

Mr. Washington represents in Negro thought the old attitude of adjustment and submission. . . . [He] distinctly asks that black people give up, at least for the present, three things,—

First, political power,

Second, insistence on civil rights,

Third, higher education of Negro youth,—

and concentrate all their energies on industrial education, the accumulation of wealth, and the conciliation of the South. This policy has been courageously and insistently advocated for over fifteen years. . . . In these years there have occurred:

1. The disfranchisement of the Negro.
2. The legal creation of a distinct status of civil inferiority for the Negro.
3. The steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro.

These movements are not, to be sure, direct results of Mr. Washington's teachings; but his propaganda has . . . helped their speedier accomplishment. The question then comes: Is it possible, and probable, that nine millions of men can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of political rights, made a servile caste, and allowed only the most meagre chance for developing their exceptional men?

—from *The Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois

In Du Bois opinion, what are some negative effects of Booker T. Washington's popular teachings?

### Document 3

Nothing has been more remarkable in the recent history of the Negro than Washington's rise to influence as a leader, and the spread of his ideals of education and progress. . . . The central idea of his doctrine, indeed, is work. He teaches that if the Negro wins by real worth a strong economic position in the country, other rights and privileges will come to him naturally. He should get his rights, not by gift of the white man, but by earning them himself.

Wherever I found a prosperous Negro enterprise, a thriving business place, a good home, there I was almost sure to find Booker T. Washington's picture over the fireplace or a little framed motto expressing his gospel of work and service. . . . Many highly educated Negroes, especially, in the North, dislike him and oppose him, but he has brought new hope and given new courage to the masses of his race. He has given them a working plan of life. And is there a higher test of usefulness? Measured by any standard, white or black, Washington must be regarded to-day as one of the great men of this country; and in the future he will be so honoured.

—editorial by Ray Stannard Baker from *American Magazine*, 1908

According to this writer, who admires Booker T. Washington and who opposes him? Why, in the writer's opinion, is Washington deserving of admiration?

What is the basic disagreement between Washington and Du Bois? Whose approach for the advancement of African Americans do you think had more merit at the time and why?

**Booker T. and W.E.B.**  
by Dudley Randall

*Circle the best argument  
of DuBois and  
Washington (each) pointed  
out in this poem*

"It seems to me," said Booker T.,  
"It shows a mighty lot of cheek  
To Study chemistry and Greek  
When Mister Charlie needs a hand  
To hoe the cotton on his land,  
And when Miss Ann looks for a cook,  
Why stick your nose inside a book?"

"I don't agree," said W.E.B.,  
"If I should have the drive to seek  
Knowledge of chemistry or Greek,  
I'll do it. Charles and Miss can look  
Another place for hand or cook.  
Some men rejoice in skill of hand,  
And some in cultivating land,  
But there are others who maintain  
The right to cultivate the brain."

"It seems to me," said Booker T.,  
"That all you folks have missed the boat  
Who shout about the right to vote,  
And spend vain days and sleepless nights  
In uproar over civil rights.  
Just keep your mouths shut, do not grouse,  
But work, and save, and buy a house."

"I don't agree," said W.E.B.,  
"For what can property avail  
If dignity and justice fail.  
Unless you help to make the laws,  
They'll steal your house with trumped-up clause.  
A rope's as tight, a fire as hot,  
No matter how much cash you've got.  
Speak soft, and try your little plan,  
But as for me, I'll be a man."  
"It seems to me," said Booker T.—  
"I don't agree," Said W.B.B.

Source: The legacy of William Howard Taft  
Donald F. Anderson, "Presidential Studies Quarterly",  
Vol. 12, No. 1. (Winter, 1982) LEGACY OF WILLIAM HAWARD TAFT | 27  
pg. 26-33.

only the eight electoral votes of Utah and Vermont) he accepted a position as Kent Professor of Constitutional Law at Yale University, where he wrote his famous treatise on presidential power entitled *Our Chief Magistrate and His Powers*. But it was not until 1921 that his life-long ambition was finally realized, and he was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court by Warren Harding, a position he would hold until his death in 1930.

Most men would be content to have been honored with any one of these prominent national offices. Taft is unique among our presidents for having successfully pursued a public career that led to both the presidency and the Chief Justiceship, an extraordinary combination of feats which we are unlikely to see repeated in American politics.

A number of observations can be made about Taft's career. First, the bulk of his pre-presidential career — 20 years to be exact — were associated with legal-judicial positions as opposed to top legislative or executive positions. Only eight years were spent in national administrative office before his actual nomination. Coming from such a legalistic-judicial background, it is little wonder that he became the most judicial of our presidents and, paradoxically, one of the most political of our Chief Justices.

Secondly, Taft came to the Presidency without ever having run for a major legislative or executive office, let alone run for reelection. True, his career had nevertheless involved him in national politics and issues, but it was a career that had not required the development of skills in campaigning or in manipulating public opinion, or as Taft himself would have expressed it, "playing to the gallery."<sup>1</sup> And as so many of our presidents and countrymen have learned to their dismay, the presidency is no place for on-the-job training.

Thirdly, the nomination of such a distinguished public servant would be virtually impossible today under our "reformed" presidential nominating procedures. The old convention system, say what you may about it, could occasionally nominate an extraordinary public ser-

vant like Taft. It remains to be seen whether this will be possible under the new selection system that has evolved, a system that seems to reward undistinguished personalities instead, at least so far. The William Howard Tafts of this world are unlikely to be nominated for the presidency again, not because of any personal deficiencies they might have, but because the personal, "presidential" qualities that attracted the attention of top party leaders are no longer counted as heavily under the popular nominating system that has emerged since 1968.

But what of the legacies of the Taft Presidency itself? Given the passage of time, they are not immediately evident. But, of course, it depends on what legacies you are referring to. There are three kinds of Taft legacies that one can focus on: 1) the actual accomplishments of the administration that have permanently affected our political landscape; 2) the political beliefs of the man that remain timeless in their appeal and significance; and 3) the selectively recorded "facts" about the administration that scholars have chosen to remember and include in our histories and texts.

What were the major accomplishments of the Taft Presidency? One has to view this administration as a transitional one which continued, however reluctantly, to move the nation in the general direction of more national regulation of growing corporate power. The Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act of 1910, of course, stands as the monument of Taft's first two years, a monument, however, that attracted as much criticism as praise, because it failed to meet popular expectations of a major decrease in rates, expectations Taft himself had fed during the 1908 campaign. Add to the Tariff Act Taft's zealous enforcement of the anti-trust laws, amendments to existing laws regulating the railroads and the food and drug industry, the 16th Amendment legalizing the income tax, and the Panama Canal Act, and you have some of the highlights of his four years. Of course, he continued the Roosevelt foreign policy of expanding American influence in the world and added a special twist by pushing commercial expansion

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through what came to be termed "Dollar Diplomacy."

However, these accomplishments are modest, indeed, in comparison to the more dramatic presidencies that have followed. We should not look to Taft's record for any enduring legacies, with the possible exception, in my estimation, of his courageous unwillingness to use military force against Mexico to quell a series of border incidents in 1911. But, as we all know, presidents who go to war always seem to attract more historical attention than those who keep the peace.

What of his conservative principles and beliefs? Here the legacies are as strong and as enduring as conservative thought itself in American history. Four areas of Taft's thought—his belief in constitutional democracy, separation of powers, political parties as essential instruments of democracy, and his warnings about the dangers of radical majoritarianism—all remain relevant intellectual legacies for our own age.

Taft believed deeply in the "rule of law" rather than the rule of men. For many today, the "rule of law" has become merely a cliché, but, for Taft, it was his religion; it was his life! Belief in its existence and its importance for civilized life was the cornerstone of his personal beliefs and public actions. He may have worshipped Law too deeply for his own public good (certainly Roosevelt and the Progressives thought so), but his public record cannot be properly understood without recognizing the critical role this belief played in guiding his public career. The "rule of law" meant, of course, constitutional democracy, always with the emphasis upon the word "constitutional" rather than the word "democracy." Democracy was only tolerable if it was restrained through appropriate constitutional devices to prevent majorities from abusing their powers.

A corollary to Taft's belief in constitutionalism was his respect for our tripartite system of government, for separation of powers and checks and balances—those ingenious inventions of our Founding Fathers designed to preserve human liberty and curtail the excesses of majority

rule. Again, one cannot understand Taft's public record unless one understands the importance of these principles in his world view. Taft is invariably associated with the so-called "constitutional" or "literalist" conception of the presidency; but he was not, in fact, an advocate of a weak presidency. He believed in a strong presidency, operating, however, in a balanced system with equally strong legislative and judicial branches. A presidency that dominated the other two branches of government permanently was not desirable in his view; in fact, it was a long term threat to our liberties.

If Taft is our only president to have spent more time worrying about the power and prestige of the judiciary than of the presidency itself (and he was!), it is not because his conception of presidential power was somehow too weak, but because he was alarmed by progressive threats to the maintenance of a strong independent judiciary, particularly the threats of judicial recall. Since the presidency was hardly in danger of being dismantled by the other two branches of government, whereas the Supreme Court was, Taft was determined to protect his favorite branch of government, even at the price of personal popularity. If the Presidency itself had been under attack, Taft, I believe, would have been equal to the challenge.

A third essential belief—one that appears increasingly at odds with the prevailing spirit of our age—was Taft's conviction that political parties were critically important to the survival of popular government. Without parties, Taft believed there could be no effective way in which the people could transform their private opinions into public policy. His whole public career is a testament to his loyalty to the Republican Party and its principles. He believed that citizens would have to subordinate their own personal views to those of the larger party organizations if they were to be effective in realizing their most important goals. In the real world, progress would be achieved not through independent action, but through party action. He publicly defended these beliefs in 1906:

As this is a party government, and as measures are controlled by party decisions, the real progress must be made along party lines; and if a man separates from his party he loses altogether any influence he may exert in determining those policies. I do not at all advocate that a man should adhere to party against high principle and conviction, but this life is all a series of compromises by which little by little, and step by step, progress toward better things is made. All the good in the world cannot be attained at one breath. We must achieve what we can at the time we can, and must let other aims and objects of the highest good abide a different opportunity for their attainment. While, therefore, we may not agree with all the principles adopted into legislation or into executive policy by a party with which we are affiliated, we should ordinarily not destroy our usefulness and power for good in influencing the party in the right direction, by withdrawing from it on issues not the most important, if, on the whole, we believe that more good can come from its success than from that of its opponent.<sup>2</sup>

Taft's ideas on parties and loyalty stand in stark contrast to the spirit of our age, an age in which party organizations have become weak reflections of their former selves, and in which the number of independents has grown by leaps and bounds. When Taft saw progressive Republicans challenging the traditional norms of party loyalty and refusing to subordinate themselves to the larger organization and its way of doing things, a falling out with them was inevitable. Whereas Taft believed that no permanent good could be accomplished by defying the party, progressives felt that their principles and the welfare of the nation were more important, and they were unwilling to subordinate themselves to an institution that was moving too slowly, sometimes in the wrong direction. For Taft, however, responsible democratic government was impossible without strong, traditional parties.

Fourth, although Taft's constitution-

alism often obscured his faith in democracy, he remained to the last a true believer in the American dream of self-government. But he remained highly skeptical of progressive panaceas such as the initiative, referendum, and recall. Many have forgotten today that Taft had shared the goals of the progressives in his national career, but the tide of progressivism had simply overwhelmed his presidency and, particularly after his battles with Roosevelt in 1912, left him etched in the public mind as an apostle of reactionary Republicanism, an appearance that was very far from the truth. As the progressives called increasingly for the democratization of our institutions, and for more direct forms of democracy, Taft held more and more firmly to his faith that only constitutional democracy was worth preserving. He shared the American faith that the people, in the long run, could be trusted to make the right decisions; that, indeed, democracy would work. He believed that the Voice of the People was the Voice of God, but only under certain conditions. He wrote in 1912,

I fully and freely admit and assert that when the American people have had time to learn all the facts and have had time to consider their bearing, their deliberate judgment is a wiser and better guide to be followed by the state than the judgment of the most experienced statesmen, the most learned jurist, the most profound student of history. In this proper sense the Voice of the People is nearer to the Voice of God than any other human decision.<sup>3</sup>

The catch was that the Voice of the People had to be channeled and refined through our constitutional system, including an independent judiciary with the power of judicial review, before decisions approximating the ideal of justice could emerge.

To the extent that progressives threatened to short circuit the deliberation required by our institutions, Taft believed their proposals for more direct democracy would inevitably bring popular disappointment and disillusionment with the

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*You're Invited...*

*To attend a formal dinner party Friday evening, February \_\_\_\_ 2011  
With Presidents Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow  
Wilson*

**Place:** *Wellesley High School*

**Time:** *Dinner will begin promptly at 7*

**R.S.V.P.:** *With Ms. Berenson , Ms. Gordon or Ms. Bartels in person*

**Topic of Discussion:** *This discussion is not only celebrating the reunion of three Presidents of the Progressive Era, but it's a forum for discussion on a current economic, political or social issue that the Obama administration has been faced with. Former President Bush is co-sponsoring and wire-tapping the event so they can listen to each of these Presidents discuss their views on how the Obama administration has tackled a particular issue and how they would handle the situation if they were in the Oval Office.*

**Task:**

- Your group will write the transcript of the wire-tapped recording of the dinner party. The dialogue must explain each president's view on a particular economic, political or social issue and how he would have handled the situation if he was in office.*
- Each President must have at least 3 lines.*
- Their comments should reflect their views on the role of the President and the Federal Government,.*
- There will be an empty seat at the table—you can choose any person to join in on the conversation..*

## Progressive Era Legislation and Constitutional Amendments

Legislation/Amendment	Effect
Sherman Antitrust Act (1890)	Outlawed monopolies and practices that restrained trade, such as price fixing
National Reclamation Act (1902)	Provided for federal irrigation projects by using money from the sale of public lands
Elkins Act (1903)	Imposed fines on railroads that gave special rates to favored shippers
Hepburn Act (1906)	Authorized the federal government to regulate railroad rates and set maximum prices for ferries, bridge tolls, and oil pipelines
Meat Inspection Act (1906)	Allowed the federal government to inspect meat sold across state lines and required inspection of meat-processing plants
Pure Food and Drug Act (1906)	Allowed federal inspection of food and medicine and banned the shipment and sale of impure food and the mislabeling of food and medicine
Sixteenth Amendment (1913)	Gave Congress the power to collect taxes on people's income
Seventeenth Amendment (1913)	Instituted the direct election of senators by the people of each state
Underwood Tariff Act (1913)	Lowered tariffs on imported goods and established a graduated income tax
Federal Reserve Act (1913)	Created the Federal Reserve Board to oversee banks and manage reserve funds
Federal Trade Commission Act (1914)	Established the Federal Trade Commission to monitor business practices, false advertising, and dishonest labeling
Clayton Antitrust Act (1914)	Strengthened the Sherman Antitrust Act by spelling out specific activities businesses could not do
Eighteenth Amendment (1919)	Banned the making, selling, and transporting of alcoholic beverages in the United States
Nineteenth Amendment (1920)	Gave women the right to vote in all elections



For two decades after 1900, those who styled themselves Progressives had a significant influence on the quality and direction of American politics. Their contribution in defining the major social issues and priorities of the period was constructive and important. Reformers raised questions about the expanding power of the corporation and its effect on public life, and impelled society to confront the problem of the proper relation of government to business. Muckrakers revealed the hazards of unsafe consumer products, exposed the cozy relationships between large economic interests and some politicians, and brought to light the deplorable condition of the poor, the laboring child and woman, and the unprotected industrial worker. Conservationists criticized the disorderly exploitation of natural resources and warned of the consequences of heedless use. Finally, urban reformers focused attention on the ills of the city, stressing pervasive corruption, substandard housing, and insufficient services. To all these concerns, Progressives brought a belief in human progress, optimism about the future of society, and a deep moralistic fervor.<sup>7</sup>

To deal with the problems they had analyzed, reform-minded Americans followed two broad and often contradictory lines of policy. They sought, as they told each other, a government at once more effective and more democratic. Achieving greater efficiency required alterations in the structures and procedures of government to overcome or reduce the conditions of disorder associated with public life in the Gilded Age. The Progressive Era valued rationality, efficiency, and the apparent orderliness of science, and its reformers sought to make these qualities operate in the nation's public affairs.

For the nation's towns and cities, proposals for the commission and city manager forms of government identified the election of aldermen from geographically or ethnically defined districts as a source of corruption and waste. Commission government, begun in Galveston, Texas, in 1900, and refined in Des Moines, Iowa, after 1907, abandoned aldermen and substituted officials with specific responsibilities for police, fire protection, and housing and public utilities and, in theory, with a broader concept of the interest of the city as a whole. By the time of the First World War, the city manager form of urban government was replacing the commission variety because of its superior claims to nonpartisanship and effectiveness. Both plans, however, stressed the same themes—a reduction of political considerations in making decisions, the importance of efficiency, and the merits of "business" methods in running the city.<sup>8</sup>

The desire to regulate the business community on the basis of expertise and nonpartisanship produced similar structural reform impulses on the state and national level. The regulatory agency became the Progressive Era's most characteristic institutional response to the problem of managing an industrial society. Members of the Wisconsin Railroad Commission or the Federal Trade Commission, experts on the industry they were to oversee, could make decisions about economic policy without having to defer to partisan pressures. They would be able to locate and promote "the public interest" with a degree of certainty that no politician could equal.<sup>9</sup>

These proposals for structural change were laudable in the abstract but scholars have raised questions about their real purpose and practical application. Urban reform that diminished the power of representatives from an individual ward often deprived an ethnic or economic minority of political influence and shifted power to a different segment of the business community. Some American cities are now engaged in dismantling Progressive structures in response to charges that the local interests of minorities have suffered at the hands of a city government that identified "the public interest" with the welfare of the dominant economic or racial group. Similarly, the regulatory agency has come under fire as a device through which the corporations transformed expert regulators into expert instruments. In their concern with institutional change, the Progressives did not sufficiently appreciate that their structural proposals could produce conservative results in the hands of men unsympathetic to reform.<sup>10</sup>

Structural changes were not, however, the entire progressive story. The reformers believed that the conduct of politics would improve when provision for more citizen action occurred, and a variety of measures looked toward that goal. All of them reflected a distrust of political parties and were an effort to restrict the power of such formal organizations. To enable voters to suggest legislative remedies and to prod lawmakers into action, the initiative supplied a procedure through which the electorate could propose laws. When an issue became disputed, the referendum allowed for an expression of public opinion at the ballot box. Adopted first in the Far West, these measures gained increasing acceptance in the East

gressive Era, pp. 133-153; Bradley R. Rice, "The Galveston Plan: Birth of a Progressive Idea," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, forthcoming.

<sup>9</sup> Grant McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 38-50; Stanley P. Caine, *The Myth of a Progressive Reform: Railroad Regulation in Wisconsin, 1903-1910* (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1970).

<sup>10</sup> For an evaluation of the effects of these reforms, see Thomas K. McCraw, "The Progressive Legacy," in Gould, *The Progressive Era*, pp. 183-185, 187-190.

<sup>7</sup> Graham, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-51, provides a useful summary of what the progressives did.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 55 (October, 1964), 157-169; Melvin G. Holli, "Urban Reform in the Progressive Era," in Gould, *The Pro-*

Source: Popular Gov't + Political Reform: 1890-1920  
Lewis L. Gould. *Current History*, July 1974.

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## 16. Popular Government and Political Reform

and South before their popularity waned around 1915.<sup>11</sup>

More controversial was the provision for the recall of elected officials and state judicial decisions. Recall sought to give citizens the power to reverse unpopular court rulings or to remove officers who failed in their trust but who were otherwise insulated from assault. Because it struck at judges and the courts—the bastions of conservative protection against the forces of democracy—the recall aroused the most intense passions of these three suggested reforms. When Theodore Roosevelt endorsed the recall of judicial decisions in 1912, he severely wounded his presidential hopes among moderate and conservative Republicans. The recall was, in any event, more discussed than adopted. Provisions for the recall of public officials were enacted in ten states between 1908 and 1915; recall of judicial decisions was confined to a single eight-year experiment in Colorado after 1913.<sup>12</sup>

The direct primary, the direct election of senators, and woman suffrage were more significant manifestations of the Progressive Era's effort to give the majority of voters "an easy, direct and certain control over their government." Pressure for primary elections to select candidates grew out of the power that party regulars exercised over nominating conventions and caucuses. To offset the advantages of their entrenched rivals, reformers like Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin championed primaries as a way the people could select honest men to run for office. "Abolish the caucus and the convention," La Follette concluded in 1897. "Go back to the first principles of democracy; go back to the people."<sup>13</sup> Primaries first appeared in Southern states around the turn of the century, and spread across the nation in the next decade and a half.

The direct election of United States Senators gained adherents in the first decade of the nineteenth century as Americans read of corruption and deadlock in the state legislatures that still selected the membership of the upper house of Congress. The Senate's place as the stronghold of conservatism, symbolized by its Republican leader, Nelson Aldrich of Rhode Island, further intensified pressures to remove this crucial electoral decision from the hands of weak or pur-

chasable state legislators. Such a reform would be, said Senator Joseph L. Bristow of Kansas, a leader in the struggle, "the most effective means of taking from organized wealth the control of the Senate, and indeed of our national politics." The work of Bristow, William E. Borah, and other Progressives guided the Seventeenth Amendment through the Congress in May, 1912, and 36 states ratified it within the next year.<sup>14</sup>

The drive for woman suffrage spanned the whole period of Progressive reform. Basically middle class in its membership and views, the suffrage campaign argued that votes for women would purify politics and bring a new moral force into public life. At the same time, the advocates of woman suffrage often stressed that female ballots could offset the votes of blacks and immigrants, perceived as sources of corruption, and suffragists frequently linked their cause with the ethnocultural goals of the forces of prohibition. Through the labors of an organization like the National American Woman Suffrage Association, voting by women spread out from its base in the Far West in the 1890's to other western states by 1914 and into the South and East during World War I. Ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 put woman suffrage in the Constitution, beyond the reach of masculine tinkering, and completed the movement's national work.<sup>15</sup>

Democratic in purpose and theory, these reforms had ambiguous and flawed results. When Progressives spoke of enhancing the power of the "people," they often defined the "people" as Americans like themselves. As a result, the instruments of popular participation were not extended to the lower classes or the economically deprived. Laws to regulate elections reduced the size of the electorate and eroded the power of the political party; the direct primary did not bring a greater voter turnout; instead, it shifted power toward candidates with incumbent status or the money to sway a contest. Devices like the initiative and referendum have proved blunt instruments for expressing the popular will. They can assault minority rights or pose complex issues in a deceptively simple way, and are ideologically neutral and not necessarily mechanisms for reform. Even woman suffrage did not produce the heralded improvement in the quality of local and national politics.

After 1900, these national pressures for political change affected the Republicans first. For more than a decade, under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, the party debated its position on the role of government in an industrial society. Republican Progressives like Roosevelt,

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan Bourne, Jr., "Initiative, Referendum, and Recall," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 109 (January, 1912), 122-129, offers a favorable, contemporary assessment.

<sup>12</sup> Edwin Maxey, "The Recall of the Judges," *Forum*, 48 (September, 1912), 294-308, gives a sense of the feelings that the recall aroused among its opponents.

<sup>13</sup> Benjamin Parke DeWitt, *The Progressive Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968, reprint of 1915 edition), p. 196; Robert M. LaFollette, *LaFollette's Autobiography: A Personal Narrative of Political Experiences* (Madison: The Robert M. LaFollette Co., 1913), p. 197; Arthur Wallace Dunn, "The Direct Primary: Promise and Performance," *The American Review of Reviews*, 46 (October, 1912), 439-445.

<sup>14</sup> Larry Joe Easterling, "Senator Joseph L. Bristow and the Seventeenth Amendment," (M.A. report, University of Texas at Austin, 1973), pp. 29-30, and *passim*.

<sup>15</sup> Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 1-13, 249-264.

### 3. FROM PROGRESSIVISM TO THE 1920s

Robert M. La Follette, and Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana advocated a program of moderate innovation that included broadened federal power, vigorous presidential action, and a wide array of reform measures to curb corporations and achieve social justice. Republican conservatives regarded such policies as a threat to their vested interests and an unwise extension of national authority over the rights of private property. In a steadily worsening series of intra-party squabbles the conservatives established an ascendancy by the time of the Taft-Roosevelt split in 1912.

The political leadership of Theodore Roosevelt was a central element in the division within the Republican party. Recent skepticism about the merits of the strong presidency has prompted reappraisals of the long-standing favorable verdict on Roosevelt's years in the White House. His assertion of executive power, praised in the case of the Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902, seems less salutary in light of the miscarriages of justice toward black soldiers that grew out of the Brownsville incident of 1906. Theodore Roosevelt was a master of the techniques and artistry of electoral politics; he was less successful in the equally demanding and subtle craft of persuading fellow politicians to do what he wanted them to do.

In his first term, succeeding William McKinley, Roosevelt played down departures in public policy and concentrated on securing the Republican presidential nomination and election in 1904 "in his own right." He adhered to the broad lines of McKinley's program in substance, but injected a moralistic thrust and flamboyant excitement into the political wars against opposition in his party and against the divided Democrats. Increased rancor and ideological discord characterized the Republicans in Roosevelt's second term. Roosevelt's support for the Hepburn Act (1906) to regulate railroads, as well as his endorsement of pure food and meat inspection legislation, helped limit Democratic gains in the election of 1906, and demonstrated a positive Republican response to public clamor against social ills. Roosevelt's leftward shift after 1907 split the Republicans into distinct and bitter factions, and his relations with Congress ran rapidly downhill in quarrels over Brownsville, conservation, and innumerable other issues. But Roosevelt's biggest miscalculation was his insistence that William Howard Taft be his successor in 1908.

Taft's four years as President were unhappy for the man and disastrous for his party. Blunders over the tariff, conservation, and patronage, combined with the rising cost of living, ended Republican control of the House of Representatives in 1910. More important, President Taft and Roosevelt drew apart over questions of policy and personality until little remained of their once warm friendship. A former judge who distrusted reformers, Taft gravitated naturally to a

more conservative posture, while Roosevelt, out of conviction and calculation, became more Progressive. In late 1911, the former President decided, because of anger at Taft, to seek the Republican nomination in 1912. Roosevelt ran as the Progressive champion, but in his decision personal considerations played as large a role as reform goals. He was tired of private life, and craved power. A bitter and protracted contest ended with Roosevelt's bolt from the national convention in June, 1912, amid claims of fraud and deceit.

Neither Taft, running as the Republican candidate, nor Roosevelt, as the Progressive party nominee, won in 1912, but the Republican party was the biggest loser. The long-range result was a confirmation of the conservative dominance in the party. When he left, Roosevelt took with him much of the constructive energy, the appeal to a broad spectrum of American society, and the responsible programs that had animated the Republicans before 1912. Roosevelt returned to his political home in 1916, but his party never quite regained what it had lost in the disaster of 1912.<sup>16</sup>

Republican division was Democratic opportunity. In the 15 years after 1894, the Democrats labored to overcome the handicaps of Cleveland's presidency, the popular memories of the 1890's, and the leadership of Bryan. Still basically wedded to states rights and its negativist stance, the Democratic party showed some signs of rejuvenation in the elections of 1906 and 1908. Winning the House in 1910 took the Democrats to the limits of the strength to be gained from Republican discord. The party's problem as 1912 approached was to find a candidate who could seize this rare chance and win the White House.

Woodrow Wilson solved the Democratic problem and secured for his party an eight-year lease on the presidency. Rising swiftly from Princeton University through the governorship of New Jersey, Wilson defeated colorless but tough opposition to obtain the presidential nomination in July, 1912. Wilson's program in the campaign, the "New Freedom," sought to break up the power of large business organizations, in contrast to Roosevelt's "New Nationalism," which recognized the existence of economic bigness and proposed systematic supervision. In his early years in national affairs, Wilson combined an ability to evoke moral themes in his speeches, a cool and hard political intelligence, and a useful philosophical flexibility. The achievements of Wilson's first term offset the perennial Republican taunt that the Democrats could

<sup>16</sup> For contrasting views of the Republicans in this period, see Horace Samuel Merrill and Marion Galbraith Merrill, *The Republican Command, 1897-1913* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1971); and Lewis L. Gould "The Republicans Under Roosevelt and Taft," in Gould, *The Progressive Era*, pp. 55-82.

## 16. Popular Government and Political Reform

not govern effectively. Wilson employed presidential power even more forcefully than had Roosevelt to win passage of the Federal Reserve Act (1913), the Underwood Tariff (1913), and the Clayton Antitrust Act (1914).

Despite Wilson's success as a party leader, the pressure of events pushed him and the Democrats toward policies that addressed the needs of key voting blocs like farmers, organized labor, and Progressives. After Republican gains in the election of 1914, Wilson faced difficult prospects for reelection in 1916. Accordingly, he wooed southern and western agrarian reformers, became more responsive to labor unions, and stressed the "peace" issue in the presidential contest. Against the Republicans the President marshaled a shaky coalition of the South and West, most Progressives, some sections of organized labor, and Americans who saw Wilson as a pacifist and his opposition as bellicose. In the interest groups that composed it, the Wilsonian coalition was a forerunner of the New Deal, but it was a volatile and tenuous combination, as the narrow Democratic victory indicated.

Wilson's second term subjected the Democratic party to a series of political shocks that left it in disarray by 1920. The military conduct of World War I was a success, but the home front experienced a wave of tensions. During the conflict, the Wilson administration abused civil liberties with practices that culminated in the excesses of the postwar "Red scare." The component parts of the Democratic alliance broke up in conflicts over farm policy, prohibition, and woman suffrage. After the war ended, the "high cost of living," labor unrest, and general economic dislocation further crippled the Democrats.

Woodrow Wilson's claims to presidential greatness seem likely to rest on something other than his last four years in office. Scholars recognize the appalling complexity of the problems he faced. Yet they give low marks to his management of the wartime economy and the transition to peacetime, deplore his encouragement of and acquiescence in attacks on civil liberties, and have even become more critical of his brainchild, the League of Nations. Wilson left the White House in March, 1921, a sick, broken man. His successor was Republican President Warren G. Harding. Harding's landslide election in 1920 was not simply an example of the adolescent foolishness of the American voter. A weak and ineffective President, Harding was an adept candidate who built a winning campaign on pervasive discontent with Wilson, the Democrats, and reform, and thereby restored the Re-

publicans to power.<sup>17</sup>

Historians disagree on the date when Progressivism faltered, but the inauguration of Harding marks a convenient terminal point. What had been the effects of the two and a half decades of political reform? For many groups in society the Progressive Era had meant little. The plight of blacks, the rural poor, and the unorganized urban worker remained desperate. Other significant social problems persisted. The excessive power of corporations had been restricted but not curbed enough, the situation of the cities reflected continuing ethnocultural tensions and governmental weakness, and the institutions of public policy showed unevenly the impact of Progressive effort. Ironically, in their concern to cleanse politics, the reformers had also weakened the national political organizations and had accelerated the decline of parties as governing forces. There was, in sum, ample basis for a sense of frustration and impotence among progressives as the 1920's began.

Yet too much emphasis on the negative features of the Progressive Era's politics is misleading. Constructive achievements, on balance, outweigh the drawbacks. Despite recent misuses of executive authority, the strengthening of the presidency under Theodore Roosevelt and Wilson was a healthy development. The major innovations of the period—regulatory agencies, election reforms, structural alterations—did not banish injustice from the nation. They did, however, mitigate the effects of an industrial society on many citizens. Most important, the politicians of the Progressive Era debated the principle that government bears a responsibility for the welfare of the diverse individuals and groups in society. For the succeeding half century, American domestic politics would pivot on questions of how far the reach of government should extend, which groups should receive what benefits, and what programs could best achieve desired goals. These were, in the largest sense, questions of detail. In the age of popular government and political reform, Republicans and Democrats posed the essential questions and began to frame answers that still set the limits for national political life.

<sup>17</sup> John J. Broesamle, "The Democrats from Bryan to Wilson," in Gould, *The Progressive Era*, pp. 83-113; Robert K. Murray, *The Politics of Normalcy: Governmental Theory and Practice in the Harding-Coolidge Era* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1973), pp. 2-6.